Why America Links Up?

The online world is no longer optional for our children. It has become an increasingly essential component of all of our lives, and our children will be the primary beneficiaries of the vast resources it has to offer. Already, kids across the country use the Internet everyday to research subjects for school and for fun and to communicate with their friends and family. From this, they are developing lifelong learning skills.

At the same time, however, ensuring that this new medium is rewarding and safe for our kids is an ongoing challenge.

America Links Up will help parents, teachers and all caregivers understand the benefits of this medium, the challenges associated with it and the resources available to address those challenges. This campaign fulfills the commitment made by the participants of the Internet-Online Summit: Focus on Children in December 1997.The campaign reflects the consensus that making the Internet a safe and rewarding place for our children is a responsibility shared by the entire Internet community—from industry to parents, from teachers to government, from law enforcement to librarians.

What is it?

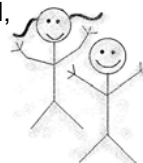America Links Up:A Kids Online Teach-In is a national campaign to encourage and support educational events in communities across the country. This multi-faceted campaign includes national public service announcements, a comprehensive website and a vast array of resources and tools to support the community events. The campaign will be kicked off during National Kids Online Week between September 14-20, 1998, but the local events can be held anytime in the following year. Adults and children will have the opportunity to attend or sponsor sessions where they can learn or help others to learn:

- Internet basics,

- Tools that promote safe, rewarding online experiences,

- Information about good quality con-tent and how to use it, and

- Ways families can safely navigate their way around this new medium. America Links Up is also part of the U.S. Department of Education's America Goes Back to School program.

Who's Involved?

A coalition of non-profit organizations, educators, companies and government agencies have worked together to create and carefully design the campaign. We are excited to work together to:

- Encourage active involvement of caring adults in children's online experiences;

- Educate and empower children to make wise, responsible decisions online;

- Raise awareness that mastering information tech skills is critical to children's success.

- Promote awareness of the "digital toolbox;" technical and non-technical resources that adults can use to promote safety and access to good content;

- Increase awareness of safe online behavior;

- Increase awareness of the law enforcement and other resources available to protect children online; and,

- Encourage communities to talk about important technology issues.

How can I get involved?

It's easy to hold a teach-in of your own in a local school, library, church, community center or even your own home. Just visit our website and you'll find everything you need (www.americalinksup.org)

What do I need to know to keep my children safe online?

There's a lot of great stuff on the Internet, but your guidance and involvement are essential to help steer kids towards the best sites and away from potential trouble. To ensure a safe trip, keep in mind the following tips and use the list of parental resources provided on the America Links Up website.

one Take the trip together. Take the time to see what your kids are doing online and what their interests are. Encourage your kids to adopt what they know about safety to the online world.

two Teach kids to never give out their name, school, address, phone number, picture or other personal information to people they meet online, especially in public places like chat rooms and bulletin boards.

three Instruct your child never to plan a face-to-face meeting alone with online acquaintances. If they are invited to a meeting, make sure they get your permission first, and that they go with you or an adult family member and always stay in a public place.

If your child receives offensive or dangerous e-mail or other communication, tell him or her not to respond and to let you know immediately. You should also alert your Internet service provider. Child pornography or any other illegal activities directed at children should be reported to the CyberTipline at www.missingkids.com/cybertip.

Establish clear ground rules for Internet use for your kids. Discuss the Tips for Kids Online. Decide whether or not to use parental control tools or protective software. Ask service providers about parental control tools, or computer stores about "child safety software" to block, restrict, monitor and review kids activities online.

Place your computer in the family room or another open area of your home. Or use the computer together at a library, school or community center. This will keep you involved while your child is online.
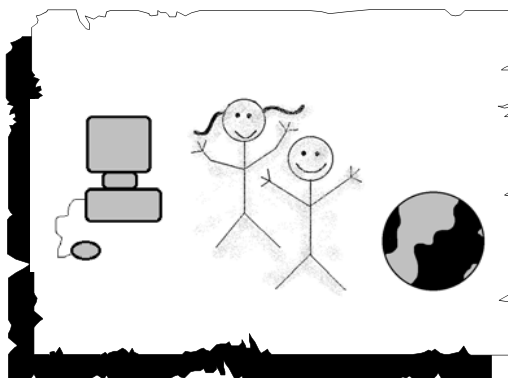
We also recommend that you go over the following "Tips for Kids Online" with your children. Tell your children that surfing the web safely and responsibly is in their hands. Children should follow their family's rules for using the Internet and keep their parents up to date about their online activities. In the same way that you taught them to look both ways before crossing the street and to not get into a stranger's car, you should also get them to agree to the following common-sense rules for online safety.

❶ I won't give out my name, age, school, address, phone number, picture or any other information about myself or my family without getting permission. This includes chat rooms, surfing the web, message boards or other online activities like entering contests or registering for clubs that may seem harmless.

❷ If I see or receive something online that looks weird or bad or that makes me feel uncomfortable, I won't respond, I'll leave that area right away and tell my parents.

❸ I won't get together with anyone I meet online without getting my parent permission's first. I know people sometimes aren't who they say they are online.

❹ I won't open or accept e-mails, files, links, URLs or other things online from people I don't really know or trust.

❺ I won't give out my password to any-one but my parents or guardian—not even to my best friend.
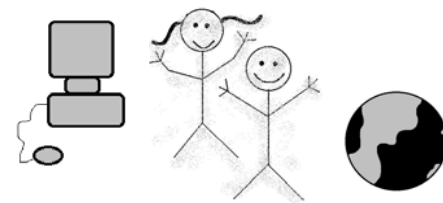
For additional informative resources, details about an America Links Up teach-in near you, and great sites you can share with your kids, check out our website at www.ameri-calinksup.org. And remember:

Take the Trip Together!!

Crime Prevention/Brochures/Rev.05/02

America Links Up

A Kids Online Teach-In

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